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ABSTRACT

To investigate whether the proportion of males to females employed as educational organizational development (OD) practitioners is equitable, sex distribution data from three recent sources are presented in female-male ratios, in categories that define the available talent pool for educational leadership, educational leadership positions, and OD practitioners. Examination of the available talent pool shows that, based on sex equity, at least one in every two or three of the top administrative and research positions in educational leadership should be held by females. In fact, the data reveal the ratios of women to men to be 1 to 50 in superintendency positions, 1 to 6 or 7 in top administrative and research positions, and 1 to 6 in OD. The study also explores the view that traditional applications of the OD process that encourage participants being open to, and influenced by, feedback, as well as supporting others, may actually inhibit rather than promote sex equity. Citing Rosabeth Moss Kantor, who has pointed out that most women in organizations would benefit more from deemphasizing these behaviors and moving toward more active self-determination, effective competition, and individual striving, the report summarizes Kantor's specific suggestions to promote sex equity among both OD practitioners and their clients. (MLF)

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SEX EQUITY IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT: NUMBERS AND PROCESSES*

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Abstract

Organization development (OD) is a highly promising means to promote educational equity. Various OD programs are underway to promote educational equity among students and staff of different races, sex, etc. However, educational OD practitioners should also consider whether OD is itself equitable. This article examines the sex equity of OD. With respect to numbers of practitioners, surveys indicate that women are just as underrepresented in OD as they are in other positions of educational leadership. Moreover, traditional applications of the OD process may actually inhibit rather than promote sex equity. Kantor demonstrated that OD encourages behaviors that women have typically overlearned and may use at the expense of more adaptive, stereotypically male, role tendencies. OD should vary its agenda to address the different learning needs of male and female participants. Specific suggestions for a more appropriate OD agenda, to promote sex equity among both OD practitioners and their clients, are summarized.

SEX EQUITY IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT: NUMBERS AND PROCESSES

Introduction

Organization developers working in education should be concerned with educational equity for at least two reasons. First, some of the change processes that they promote are directly designed to impact on equity among students and/or staff. Second, they need to know the extent to which organization development (OD) is itself equitable, that is whether persons of each sex, race, etc. are proportionally represented among the people working within OD.

The research for this article was gathered to shed light on the extent to which educational OD is, in fact, equitable. The author sought information on the numbers of female and male practitioners engaged in educational OD, and on the subtler issue of how the OD process contributes to sex equity or inequity. Equity with respect to race, age, and handicap should be of equal concern to educators as sex equity. This article focuses on sex equity because data are readily available on this topic, and because the findings with respect to sex may parallel those for other categories of educational equity.

Much evidence indicates that women, while still holding more of the public school teaching positions (Grant and Lind, 1979), are underrepresented in all positions of leadership in education (see references below). The author sought to determine the answers to three questions:

1. What is the available "talent pool" of women for positions of educational leadership? If too few women are available with the necessary credentials, expertise, etc. to fill leadership positions, this might be enough to explain the preponderance of males in such positions. Entering and completing a doctoral program in education, and holding full-time faculty status in education in institutions of higher education, were chosen as rough indicators of the numbers of people with high-level talent in education who are female and who are male.

2. What is the proportion of men and women in positions of administrative or research leadership in schools, in universities, and in state, federal, and R&D education agencies? The extent to which women are represented in such leadership positions provides a useful comparison to the numbers of men and women who are engaged in educational OD. As an OD practitioner one might hope that, even if OD is not totally equitable, it is as or more equitable in its own ranks as the rest of education.

3. What is the proportion of females and males who are actively engaged in educational OD? While the subject of whether the OD process is sex equitable has received recent attention (Kantor, 1977), the author is not aware of previous research addressing the more basic question of whether the educational OD profession represents males and females equitably within its own ranks. Fortunately a recent national survey of OD practitioners in education (Miles, et al., 1978) provides a tentative answer to this question.

Method

Table 1 summarizes data from three recent sources which bear on the above questions. It presents sex distribution data for three categories defining

the available talent pool for educational leadership, seven categories of educational leadership positions, and one category of OD practitioners.

Wherever possible, the actual number of males and females found in each category is specified. Percentages are reported in other cases, that is the proportion of males and females in each category. To simplify comparison the numerical or percentage figures from each source were converted to ratios, signifying the number of men found in each category for every one woman in that category. The ratio in each case was rounded to the nearest whole number but the table also shows (in parentheses) the exact ratio carried to the first decimal point.

Table 1

Ratio of Females to Males
Available for and Holding Positions of Educational
Leadership in the United States

Survey Group	Relative Numbers/ Percentages	Ratio (1 Female to every __ Male)	Data Source
(1) AVAILABLE TALENT POOL			
Students Entering Education Doctoral Programs	3388 M 2552 F	1 (1.3)	Tittle, et al., 1975, Table 1. Own survey of 39 colleges and universities with doctoral programs in education
Students Completing Education Doctorates	4493 M 1895 F	2 (2.4)	Tittle, et al., 1975, Table 4. Own survey of 60 institutions awarding education doctorates in 1972-73 and 1973-74
Graduates Teaching Education Full-Time in Colleges & Universities	3844 M 1203 F	3 (3.2)	Tittle, et al., 1975, Table 5. Own survey of 32 institutions' full-time education faculty
(2) TOP ADMINISTRATORS/RESEARCHERS IN EDUCATION AGENCIES			
Superintendents, K-12	99.9% M 0.1% F	100	Schmuck, 1980, Table 4.6. Estimated percentage distribution of full-time public school employees nationwide in 1972-73
Principals, K-12 (including assistant principals)	87.1% M 12.9% F	7 (6.8)	Schmuck, 1980, Table 4.7. Estimated percentage distribution of full-time public school employees nationwide in 1976
Staff Supervisors, K-12	85 % M 15 % F	6 (5.7)	Schmuck, 1980, p. 90. Schmuck's (1975) finding that men occupy 85% of staff positions that involve direct supervision of adult professionals
National Institute of Education and Office of Education	87 M 7 F	7 (6.7)	Schmuck, 1980, p. 82. Steiger and Szanton's (1977) finding of number of women and men holding top positions (GS-16 to GS-18) in 1976.

Table 1, continued

Survey Group	Relative Numbers/ Percentages	Ratio (1 Female to every __ Male)	Data Source
(2) TOP ADMINISTRATORS/ RESEARCHERS IN EDUCATION AGENCIES, continued			
State Education Agencies	52 M 9 F	6 (5.8)	Tittle, et al., 1975, Table 11. Own survey of numbers of men and women in highest of 5 job status categories in 28 state education departments and education departments of two territories
Research and Development Organizations	88 % M 12 % F	7 (7.3)	Tittle, et al., 1975, p. 22. Own survey of percentage of men and women in highest of six job status categories in 25 R&D organizations
Full/Associate Professors of Education	2655 M 462 F	6 (5.7)	Tittle, et al., 1975, Table 5. Own survey of full-time full and associate professors of education at 69 institutions
(3) ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS	85 % M 15 % F	6 (5.7)	Miles, et al., 1978, p. 2. Own survey of 357 organization development practitioners in public education (K-12)

For example, Tittle, et al.'s (1975) finding that 3388 male students and 2552 female students were enrolled in full-time doctoral study in education is stated in terms of the ratio of females to males, or 1 female to every 1.3 males (3388 ÷ 2552 = 1.3).

Results

Available Talent Pool

Table 1 shows that the number of men and women entering doctoral study in education is fairly close: 1 male to every 1.3 females. In terms of the number who complete the doctorate, however, there are 2.4 males to every 1 female, which suggests a serious process of attrition. Continuing female attrition from the available talent pool for educational leadership is evident from Tittle, et al.'s finding that there are 3.2 males for every 1 female among full-time academic faculty in education.

We can answer the first question above as indicating that the available talent pool for positions of educational leadership is indeed more limited among females than among males. Still, other things equal we should still expect at least one in every two or three of the top administrative and research positions in educational institutions to be held by females (one in two if we use the doctorate *per se* as an indicator of talent, or one in three if we look at the numbers of males and females who are teaching education in colleges and universities).

Positions of Educational Leadership

The second part of Table 1 shows the ratio of females and males holding top administrative or research positions in United States education agencies. Table 1 indicates a general trend across education agencies, namely, for

every one woman to hold a top administrative or research position, six or seven men hold such positions. Among school superintendents, however, women were virtually nonrepresented when these figures were collected. Lest we assume that these figures are seriously out of date, more recent figures from Oregon show some progress but little overall change. Schmuck (1979) found an increase in the percentage of female superintendents in Oregon from 0.8 in 1972-73 to 1.9 in 1978-79. This latest figure still represents a ratio of only one woman to every 50 men in superintendent positions.

Thus, except for the superintendency where the discrepancy is even greater, men currently outnumber women in educational leadership ranks by a ratio of six or seven to one. Given our earlier determination that the available talent pool for educational leadership is one woman to every two or three men, it is clear that education as a whole is not distributing positions of leadership equitably. There should be at least twice as many women in leadership positions (roughly, one for every three men versus one for every six) as there are now.

OD Practitioners

The third part of Table 1 indicates that men outnumber women among practitioners of educational OD by about six to one. This ratio is identical to that found in most of the categories of educational leadership described above. Educational OD seems neither more nor less equitable than the rest of education, in other words. Women are underrepresented by at least half the extent of their availability (that is, we could expect one woman for every two or three men, but we find one woman for every six men, in educational OD).

It is clear that OD, like the rest of education, has work to do to

become more sex equitable in its staffing patterns. Simply increasing the numbers of women recruited or permitted to do OD will not solve the problem, however. As more women enter OD work the profession itself may need to undergo transformation in order to maintain its leadership status within education. Touhey (1974a, 1974b) found a tendency for people to devalue professions in which the proportion of women practitioners was expected to increase, while perceiving female-dominated professions as higher in prestige when the proportion of males in these professions was expected to increase. Touhey concluded that occupational prestige is related to the sex ratio of those in that occupation.

Sex Equity in the OD Process

We have seen that women are as underrepresented in educational OD as they are in other positions of educational leadership. Now we will examine whether OD as a process contributes to sex equity among education professionals.

Rosabeth Moss Kantor (1977) recently addressed this issue. She argued that typical OD methods like group training and process consultation often prevent the growth of competence in women. The reason is that such methods tend to promote behaviors that women have overlearned, and may need to unlearn, in order to practice more adaptive behaviors. For example, OD generally encourages being open to and influenced by feedback, as well as supporting others. Kantor pointed out that most women in organizations would benefit more from deemphasizing these behaviors and moving toward more active self determination, effective competition, and individual striving instead. " . . . Trainers and consultants need to keep in mind two very different agendae for men and for women" (p. 110).

Kantor sets forth recommendations for an agenda that would take existing

sex differences into account, yet would promote sex equity for both men and women. Her recommendations include:

1. Modifying the design of training programs, and the consulting styles of practitioners, in accord with the sex composition of the group involved. For example, OD consultants might concentrate on helping men learn about relating, while helping women learn about setting boundaries. They could also help men and women learn to accept each other in these new modes.
2. Modifying group composition to include a "critical mass" of females in every training or work group so as to reduce stereotyping, change group culture, and provide a supportive atmosphere for all individuals' growth.
3. Sharing personal information about men's and women's actual behavior and actual attitudes, etc. so as to introduce more reality, and more appreciation of possibility, into suggestions for organizational change.
4. Making available "expert" knowledge on women in organizations, to help participants confront their own stereotypes and assumptions without attacking them as individuals.
5. Diagnosing all aspects and levels of the organization to find out where women are concentrated, where they are going, and what changes are needed to make the organizational structure less sex segregated.
6. Ensuring sponsorship from the top of the organization for any efforts, including OD, that presume to increase the status of women within the organization.
7. Promoting change from within, by helping internal staff develop their own resources and programs to improve women's status on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion

OD as a group of professional practitioners in education is characterized by the same underrepresentation of women as other areas of educational leadership. As more women enter the field a more balanced sex ratio will result. However, given the still prevalent tendency to base an occupation's prestige on the proportion of male practitioners in the field, OD will need to develop a new image in order to maintain its leadership status. The OD profession can improve its image, at the same time contributing to sex equity within its own ranks, by developing in both its male and female practitioners the full range of skills and competencies that make for good OD. It can promote equity, in turn, in its client populations by ensuring that OD practitioners demonstrate more sensitivity to equity issues in interventions applying those skills and competencies.

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